

SAFE warns about labelling uncertainty around allergens in proteins from precision fermentation, calls for consumer protection

SAFE has sent a letter to the European Commission's DG SANTE to ask for clarification about the rules that govern the labelling of allergens in dairy products/foods and drinks made of proteins from precision fermentation, instead of animal milk. The potential conflict arises from the legal requirement to display allergens clearly in the labelling of all food products, through the declaration 'milk', in compliance with the Food Information to Consumers regulation.

In the case of dairy from precision fermentation, this is in contradiction with the Common Market Organisation regulation (1308/2013), which limits the use of the designation "milk" to products from animals.

SAFE Deputy Director Luigi Tozzi said: "We urge the European Commission to provide clarity about this potential conflict that would force producers to comply with one regulation at the expense of the other. In the current situation, a producer using precision fermentation would have to either break the CMO legislation by using the protected 'milk' designation, which is exclusively intended for dairy products from animals, or ignore the potential allergens in the labelling of their food products. Both options are deeply problematic."

Proteins from precision fermentation can cause identic allergic reactions in people who are allergic to conventional milk, especially where these proteins are molecularly identical to proteins naturally found in cow milk.

SAFE believes that consumers with milk allergies should be able to clearly understand from the labelling whether a product contains a protein that may pose a risk to them. Technological innovation must not come at the expense of transparency or consumer protection.